

Discussion Group #1 Roles for a Backup Library

One idea of the national Emergency Preparedness project is to identify network member libraries willing to serve as backup libraries (based on a yet-to-be-defined role for a backup library).

Please discuss and answer the following questions with your group.

Before you start, please identify a volunteer who will present a summary of the group's feedback for general discussion at 11 a.m.

1. What do you see as the role for a backup library? For example, if your library is shut down for several days during an emergency, what kinds of services or support would you most need from a backup library?
2. How could the RML help to coordinate services and assistance from your backup library?
3. Are there "natural partners" for backup libraries? (What about geographic, power grid considerations?)
4. What are some example types of special projects or awards that the RML could consider funding to encourage emergency preparedness activities by libraries for their organizations and their communities?

DISCUSSION NOTES

Loansome Doc: This was the first service mentioned as something that could be provided by a backup library. It was characterized as an essential service. Library users who have registered with their library for Loansome Doc could have their requests filled by the backup library if their own library had been taken out of commission. The idea would be that somehow the system would know (or be told) to direct all Loansome Doc requests for a library that has been closed by an emergency to that library's backup library. Someone would have to trigger this, perhaps it would be the RML. At present we do not know of an automatic way for this to happen. A Loansome Doc user can register for more than one library, but that user selects the primary library. Users could register for their library and their library's backup library for Loansome Doc service, but we don't know whether it is possible to automatically switch users from their primary library to the backup library. A built-in forwarding system for Loansome Doc is needed.

Interlibrary Loan: Backup arrangements for ILL should take into account the various channels through which users might submit requests, such as email and Web forms.
NOTE: Although the discussion didn't overtly specify, the participants were talking about services to their users, so they were probably talking about requests to borrow materials

from other libraries—the “borrowing” half of ILL, also known sometimes as “outgoing” requests (i.e., the library sends a request “out” to another library to “borrow” an item or obtain a photocopy of something not in their collection).

Other Services: The feeling that services for “walk-in” users would be of less importance than continued provision of online access to information resources, plus some way to handle requests for information via email, web form, and telephone. This would be in a situation where the library was out of commission but clinical services were still in operation. The comment was that “it’s all about power”—electricity is first priority, then networking and servers. Kathy Murray commented, “Look at what your people expect and think about how to provide that level of service. Is there a difference between clinical, research, service to students? Service to clinicians may be the most critical.”

Email: Michael pointed out that an institution’s email server could be down but that a library could put in place a freely available email address—like a gmail address—as a place to receive forwarded requests.

Natural Partners: Kathy Murray commented that her library is prepared to back up any medical library in Alaska—and in fact is backing up the Alaska Native Medical Center at present, doing DOCLINE for them—but that she doesn’t know who would back her library up. Helen Guerrero-Randall added that Oregon libraries can turn to OHSU for backup, and that her library has provided ILL backup for Klamath Falls. In the discussion, comments were that library size should be considered, that Resource Libraries could back up other Resource Libraries, and that collection similarities could be considered. In some cases libraries in Canada may be natural partners for libraries in our region. Kathy Murray suggested that large libraries could be partnered with large libraries so that they don’t all turn to the University of Washington. There is a need to understand the chain of command and know who is responsible for what.

Assistance from the RML: The RML could facilitate backup agreements between Resource Libraries. There was the idea of some kind of personalizable template for libraries with questions to fill in, covering the essential basics. It might be a trifold or it could be a wallet card. Something small, maybe a one-page laminated sheet. There could be a class about emergency preparedness toolkits. Funding could be made available for alternative technology such as satellite phones, walky-talkies, HAM radio. Provide information about types of disasters and what they would mean, what would be lost—examples of types of disasters and what happened to libraries. Read about these, condense and provide the most important information to network members. Help libraries create continuity of operations plans. Provide some sort of needs survey of individual libraries by experts.

Power Grid: It would be very helpful to know how that works so that backup libraries are not on the same grid, but power grid information may not be publicly available due to security concerns. It could also be useful to know whether Canada’s power grid is the same as that for the US.

eHarmony: The group joked that this might be a model for matching up libraries, and that the RML could provide “funding for a date with our eHarmony partner” library.

Final Note: The discussion was lively but did not necessarily address all four questions that were provided.

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